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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MOPS](#) [MARR](#) [NATO](#) [KPAO](#) [HR](#) [DEFENSE](#) [REFORM](#)
SUBJECT: NATO OUTREACH IN HIGH GEAR, CROATIAN PUBLIC
SUPPORT CLIMBING

REF: A. ZAGREB 265
 [1](#)B. ZAGREB 193
 [1](#)C. ZAGREB 173
 [1](#)D. 06 ZAGREB 1462 AND PREVIOUS

[1](#)1. SUMMARY AND COMMENT: After a slow start, the GoC's NATO public education campaign is moving into high gear. Head of MFA's NATO Office Neven Mikec highlighted the GoC's now crowded public outreach calendar with Embassy PolOff, PAO, and DATT at April 12 joint communications working group session. Thanks in large part to the breadth and pace of GoC outreach, Mikec was able to report March poll results indicating that 43 percent of the Croatian public now support NATO accession - up from 39 percent in December 2006. Post is aggressively supporting GoC efforts through Democracy Commission grants, speaker tours, our own public statements and outreach, and engagement with the embassies of other Allies. END SUMMARY AND COMMENT.

BOZINOVIC ROAD SHOW ATTRACTS CROWDS IN SMALL TOWNS

[1](#)2. Croatian Ambassador to NATO Davor Bozinovic and a number of Croatian military officers were in the midst of their own "NATO road show" which they completed this week, holding public debates in six towns ranging from Vukovar to Gospic. Partnering with local mayors and county prefects from all parties to illustrate the political consensus in favor of NATO membership, they attracted 100 to 200 community and business leaders, and members of the local media at each stop. Bozinovic has recently also made nearly daily appearances in the media, ranging from newspaper commentaries to political talk show appearances.

[1](#)3. Other GoC officials are also participating in regular public debates, with Mikec leaving the working group on April 12 to appear at a public roundtable organized by the Croatian Atlantic Council that evening. In addition, the GoC will participate in a NATO PDD-funded regional round table in June in Opatija focused on a cost-benefit analysis of NATO membership. While critics of NATO accession have become more vocal, GoC now immediately responds with arguments in favor of membership that have grown increasingly refined, concise, and consistent. In addition, President Mesic has regularly voiced his support for Croatia's membership.

NATO EXERCISES OFFER OUTREACH OPPORTUNITY

[1](#)4. The GoC continues with extensive planning for outreach efforts linked to upcoming NATO exercises - IDASSA, a civilian disaster response exercise in Zadar in May, and NOBLE MIDAS, a naval exercise along the central coast in

October. Mikec has requested NATO IS support in pre-exercise outreach to environmental and public safety NGOs. He hopes NATO IS environmental representatives will visit Croatia soon to share with NGOs and the media planned measures to mediate environmental impacts from NATO exercises.

15. MOD spokeswoman Marijana Klanac also discussed military outreach efforts, which included several media appearances of Croatian naval officers conducted jointly with Embassy PA office during the April 4-9 NATO Standing Maritime Group-2 visit to Split and a seminar planned for mid-June to train officers in media relations.

NON-GOVERNMENT ACTORS STEPPING INTO THEIR ROLES

16. The ruling party, the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ), has also engaged its youth wing in promoting NATO, with roundtables involving students and retired military officers scheduled in each county throughout the summer. NGOs are also increasingly active, with the Atlantic Council planning an event with Democracy Commission support in June to launch a chapter in Dalmatia, where skepticism toward NATO membership is relatively high. Post also recently recruited the Croatian Officers Assembly, a member of the NATO-affiliated Interallied Confederation of Reserve Officers (CIOR), to develop a Democracy Commission proposal to educate the public about the Alliance.

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